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SUBJECT: FINAL COMMUNIQUE OF THE EXPANDED MINISTERIAL  
CONFERENCE OF THE NEIGHBOURING COUNTRIES

¶1. On April 22, the participants of the Expanded Ministerial Conference of the Neighbouring Countries of Iraq issued a final communique listing agreements reached during the conference. Text of the communique is included below. Overview of conference reported septel.

¶2. Begin text.

Final Communique of the Expanded Ministerial Conference of the Neighbouring Countries of Iraq, Egypt and Bahrain and the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council and the G8

Kuwait, 22nd of April 2008

Upon the invitation of the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Iraq, the Foreign Ministers of the Neighbouring Countries of Iraq, Egypt, Bahrain, UAE, Oman, Qatar and the Permanent Members of the UN Security Council and the G8 held a meeting in Kuwait on the 22nd of April, 2008. The United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Arab League, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the European Union also took part in the meeting. The meeting was designed to contribute concretely to the government and the people of Iraq's efforts to restore permanent peace, stability, and prosperity in their country through invigoration of the existing national reconciliation dialogue, in combating terrorism, strengthening the rule of law and widening participation in the political process. The meeting aimed to provide ongoing strong and effective support to both the government and people of Iraq. The meeting also served the purpose of the participant countries to reiterate their commitment to Iraq's territorial integrity, unity, full sovereignty and independence, and non-interference in its internal affairs. The meeting affirmed its continuous implementation of the obligation that it has committed to undertake in this regard.

The participants agreed to:

¶1. Reaffirm the respect of national unity, independence, full sovereignty, territorial integrity, Arab and Islamic Identity of Iraq; commit to the preservation of Iraq's internationally recognized borders, and pledge to adhere to a comprehensive and consistent commitment to the principle of non-interference in Iraq's internal affairs; stressing the right of the Iraqi people to freely determine their political system and political future and control their natural and

financial resources,

¶2. Affirm the full support for Iraq and its people and the efforts of the constitutionally elected Iraqi government and Council of Representatives; to achieve the goals of the Iraqi people in a speedy and effective manner for a free, prosperous, stable, united, democratic and federal Iraq that ensures the fundamental and equal rights of the Iraqi people to peacefully participate in the ongoing political process,

¶3. Reconfirm the commitment of the International Community and Iraq's neighbors to promote peace, stability, and security in Iraq which shall reflect positively on the security and stability of the region and the interests of its people and the international community as a whole,

¶4. Welcome the establishment of the Ad-Hoc Support Mechanism formed by the Iraqi government within the Iraqi MOFA as adopted in the Expanded Iraq Neighbours Ministerial Conference held in Istanbul on November 3, 2007; also approve the Terms of Reference of the Ad Hoc Support Mechanism, and call upon all concerned countries and organizations to cooperate with its work,

¶5. The conference reviewed and adopted the recommendations of the three committees (the Energy Committee, the Committee of Displaced Iraqis, and the Committee of Security Coordination and Cooperation) as attached to this final communiqué; affirmed the importance of their implementation by all concerned states; and looked forward to the three committees convening their next sessions - on security in Damascus, energy in Istanbul, and displaced persons in Amman - as soon as possible,

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¶6. Support the efforts of the Iraqi Government in broadening the political process, strengthening the elected institutions, reinforcing political dialogue and national reconciliation, assisting vulnerable groups including the internally and externally displaced persons, and promoting the protection of human right and judicial and legal reform,

¶7. Encourage all Iraqis to engage in comprehensive political dialogue and national reconciliation for the sake of Iraq's stability, unity, and its sustainable development,

¶8. Stress the importance to achieve Iraqi national reconciliation and accord, praising the role of the Iraqi government in this regard, and calling on the Arab League to continue its efforts in coordination and cooperation with the Iraqi government and concerned parties,

¶9. Applaud the continuous effort by the Iraqi government to confront those who foment violence throughout Iraq; commend the role of the Iraqi armed and security forces in confronting and deterring the recent threats posed by armed groups; and welcome the Government's commitment to disarm and dismantle all militias and extra-governmental armed groups, enforcing the rule of law, and ensuring the State's monopoly on armed forces,

¶10. Stress the principle of the Iraqi national identity and invite all components of the Iraqi people to work for the enhancement of the National Unity, regardless of their political trends and ethnic and sectarian affiliations; and seek to employ the historical multi-cultural heritage as a mean of unification not division,

¶11. Call upon international and regional concerned organizations (UNESCO, ALECSO, ISESCO, and IRCICA) to contribute to the preservation and revitalization of the historical heritage of Iraq, that has been destroyed or damaged due to the war; and welcome active support from the neighbours and international community for their effort, and to help the Iraqi people to retrieve their stolen heritage,

¶12. Acknowledge the determined endeavors of the Syrian, Jordanian and Egyptian governments in generously hosting Iraqis; recognize the obligations of Iraq and the international community in supporting host countries to address the resulting burdens on their services, infrastructure, and resources and to create conditions conducive to a voluntary, safe, and dignified return,

¶13. Acknowledge the importance of the International Compact with Iraq for the political reconciliation and reconstruction of this country, and its commitment to assist the government of Iraq through political and economic reform, capacity building and providing conditions for sustainable development; in this context, recognize the role and potential of neighboring countries in the construction of Iraq, welcome the decision of the Paris Club, and invite all the creditors to Iraq to follow its example, in a way that contributes in reducing Iraqi debts; welcome the willingness of the government of Sweden to host the next session of the International Compact with Iraq; and welcome the contribution of Iraq's neighbours and regional states in the development of economic progress in Iraq,

¶14. Affirm the efforts of the United Nations and commend UNAMI's important role in providing support, consultation, assistance and coordination with the Iraqi government according to the Security Council Resolution "1770" of (2007), and other relevant Security Council resolutions; welcome the active assistance of UNAMI to the establishment of the Ad-Hoc support mechanism and to its activities to support and develop regional dialogue on Iraq,

¶15. Encourage and urge all states, in particular the neighbours of Iraq, to open or reopen their diplomatic missions, and enhance those existing by raising the level of representation, and expedite the sending of their Ambassadors to Iraq, which will contribute in the improvement and development of bilateral relations; welcome the opening of the Office of the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Baghdad as an encouraging development that will enable the

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Organization to follow up its initiatives more actively, including its Mecca Declaration initiative; welcome states who decided to re-open their embassies in Baghdad; and urge the government of Iraq to expedite its appointment of Ambassadors to neighbouring countries and others,

¶16. Condemn the aggression and war crimes of the former regime of Iraq against peoples of Iraq, Islamic Republic of Iran and the State of Kuwait; condemn the killing of Kuwaiti war-prisoners and nationals of other countries at the hands of the former regime in Iraq, and the former Iraqi regime's coverage of these crimes for over ten years, which is considered a violation of international humanitarian law; and welcome the steps being taken by Iraq to take the perpetrators of these crimes to courts, and also welcome the appointment of Ambassador Gennady Tarasov as UN High- Level coordinator and commend the efforts of his predecessor , the late Ambassador Yuli Voronstov and his achievements during his work in this humanitarian issue; invite all concerned parties to continue their cooperation with the International Red Cross Committee to uncover the fate of the rest of the missing Kuwaiti citizens and others,

¶17. Condemn all acts of terrorism in all its forms in Iraq, call for the immediate cessation of all such acts, support the Iraqi Government's increasing efforts in combating terrorism including all efforts to prevent Iraqi territory from being used as a base for terrorism against neighbouring countries and vice versa; and takes note of the bilateral arrangements concluded between Iraq and neighbouring countries regarding the fight against terrorism, in this regard, support Iraqi government efforts to strengthen the capabilities of its armed and security forces to assume full

security responsibility in the country,

¶18. Reaffirm the obligations of all states, in accordance with international law, relevant international agreements, UN Security Council Resolutions 1546 (2004) and 1618 (2005), and other relevant Security Council resolutions, to combat terrorist activities and prevent the use by terrorists of their territory for supplying, organizing and launching terrorist operations, and help Iraq to expel the terrorist organizations out of its territories,

¶19. Support the joint efforts of Iraq and its neighbouring countries to prevent the transit of terrorists and illegal arms to and from Iraq; re-emphasize the importance of strengthening cooperation between Iraq and its neighbouring countries to control their common borders and prevent all kinds of illicit trafficking, including financial and logistical support for terrorists and terrorist organizations; and refuse instigation of violence and terror,

¶20. Reconfirm the decisions of the Neighbouring Countries Interior Ministerial Meetings and welcome the outcome of the last meeting which took place in Kuwait on October 23, 2007, and call for the cooperation with its secretariat based in Iraq,

¶21. Welcome the convening of the Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union Conference which took place in the city of Irbil in Iraq on 11 March, 2008.

The participants expressed their appreciation to the State of Kuwait for hosting the conference, and expressed their desire and hope to hold the Fourth Expanded Ministerial Meeting in Baghdad.

End Text.

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